

# *The Bushwalker*

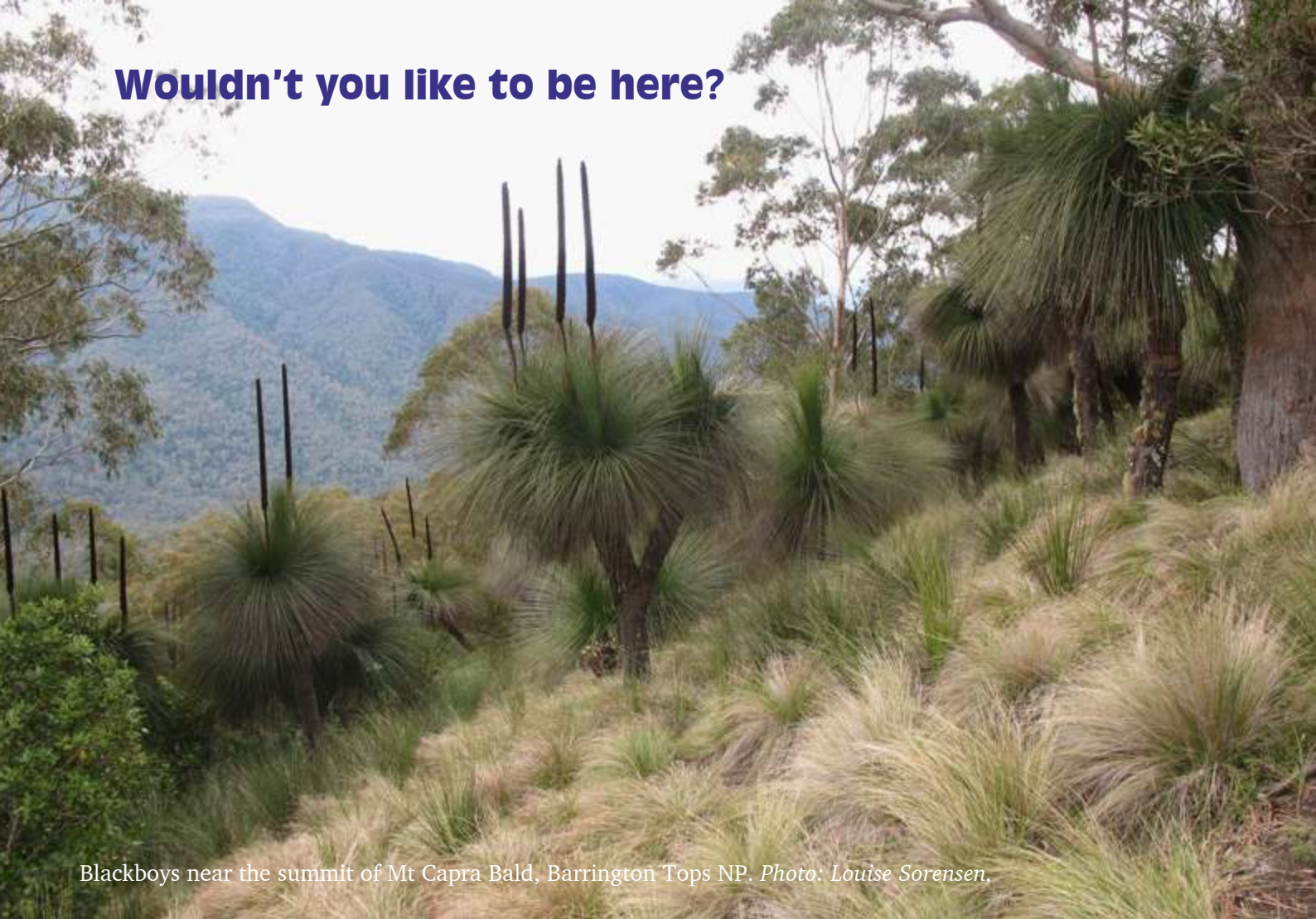


**Approaching the Drei-Zinnen-Hutte  
in the Italian Dolomites**  
Via Alpina Red Route

**Volume 36  
Issue 4  
Spring 2011**



**Wouldn't you like to be here?**



Blackboys near the summit of Mt Capra Bald, Barrington Tops NP. *Photo: Louise Sorensen,*



Double Rainbow off Korowal Knife Edge. *Photo: Hugh Spiers*



# The Bushwalker

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The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Inc represents approximately 66 Clubs with a total membership of about 8,700 bushwalkers.

Formed in 1932, the Confederation provides a united voice on behalf of all bushwalkers on conservation, access and other issues.

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**Front Cover:** Approaching the Drei-Zinnen-Hutte in the Italian Dolomites, Via Alpina Red Route. Photo: Roger Caffin.

Volume 36, Issue 4, Spring 2011

## From the editor's desk. . .

**T**he front cover needs a little explanation. Sue and I have just spent two months (July, August & September) walking the Via Alpina Red Route from Trieste to Oberstdorf this winter (summer in Europe of course.) The track goes through the Italian Dolomites, past the spectacular Drei Zinnen peaks. Yep, that's them in the background. You don't count kilometres in this country though: you count thousands of metres of ascent and descent - each day. The hardest was +3,000 m and -1,500 m in one day.

We took our 'normal' Australian bushwalking gear of course, but we dispensed with our tent and mats. It's fine and sunny in the photo, but we did cop some storms of up to 150 kph and 30 cm of snow during the 2 months, and you just don't try using a light-weight summer tent under those conditions. Besides, they feed you in these huts!

Sue was carrying about 7 kg and I was carrying about 9 kg - and we still had a lot of reserves which the locals don't normally carry. Some of them turn up on Saturday afternoon with little more than a jacket, a towel and a toothbrush. All very different.

## Articles for Publication

**I**would like to thank the people who have sent in articles for publication recently. Unfortunately, any which were sent in before August have been lost. When we came back from Europe I found that my network had taken a lightning hit through the local grid, and disk drives had been damaged. Yes, I had everything turned off, and yes I have both a hefty mains conditioner and a separate backup system. But a little plug pack powering the speakers on one computer was not filtered, and I think we got a rather large spike on the ground or the neutral which took out the most susceptible components. Sigh. 15+ years of data gone. The disks have gone to Data Recovery, but there are no guarantees. One disk is not even spinning.

So if you have sent me stuff before August and it hasn't been published, please consider sending it again.

Anyhow, please keep those articles rolling in. We need them. Plain text please, and original unedited photos direct from the camera. If you want to include a DOC file or a PDF (in addition to the plain text) to illustrate the sort of layout you have in mind, please do so as well.

Please note that opinions expressed by authors may not represent the official opinions of the Confederation or any Club. The Editor's opinions are his own, if he can find them.



Roger Caffin, Editor

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## Errata

In the Autumn Issue in an article entitled 'Attack' I showed a photo of a lizard which I thought was a baby Blue-Tongue. I have since been told by not one but two readers that it was a baby Pink Tongue Skink. The later is 'terrestrial and partly arboreal, forages at dusk and the first few hours of darkness, often basking early in the day and late in the afternoon' (adapted from 'A Photographic Guide to Snakes & Other Reptiles', by Gerry Swan). The juvenile has more prominent markings than the adult. Well, both are cute.

My thanks to Jace Austin and another reader whose name was lost in the disk crash—*Editor*

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# Lost Chord Crater

Yuri Bolotin  
The Bush Club

Members of the party met at the Bylong General Store for coffee, hot chocolate, and to say hi to the store co-owner Jayne Watson, who together with her partner Jodie Nancarrow jointly manage the 'Hillview' property in Upper Bylong – the start of our walk. I discussed our plans with Jayne and asked for her advice regarding the location of a hermit's cave that we were hoping to visit on the last day. The hermit, a previous owner of "Hillview", was called Bill. He occupied the cave during the last world war. Jayne was only able to show me a rough location on the map of the part of Widden trail from where a faint access path would lead us to the cave. As the cave according to Jayne was not visible from Redbank Creek (our route for the last day), we decided to look for it on our way in.

At 11:15 our cars were parked just past the big house at Hillview, GR 31662 99703, 373 m, and we were on our way. The temperature was 8 C, the sky was blue with little white clouds and there was hardly any wind. Our entire walk that day was on the Widden Trail. The trail was in good condition and, given permissions from the land owners, can be driven in a 4WD all the way to Gowrie Hut. It must be noted that apart from Hillview, another private property secured with a locked gate must be crossed about 3km before the Hut. For the purposes of today's exercise, we had consents from the owners of both properties to cross on foot. We haven't had a chance to investigate the condition of the Widden Trail beyond (south) of Gowrie Hut, but just at the Hut it crosses the headwaters of Cousins Creek through a very deep ditch which would present difficulties for a mid size 4WD. Initially flat, it started to climb sharply after the first half a kilometre or so. It went through a series of steep inclines and saddles, each one looked like the end of the climb, only to be followed around the corner by another incline. All in all, about

300 m of altitude needed to be gained. The views of sandstone cliffs above, surrounded by eucalyptus forest, helped to break the monotony of the climb.

After about 40 minutes of steep climbing, the trail flattened out and was now traversing high basalt country with its dark red rich soil and tall grasses. The country was quite open there, as a big proportion of trees would have been removed in the past by the cattle graziers. From time to time, we saw old, broken down fences. Rusting pieces of agricultural machinery lying by the roadside were interesting for us city folks to examine.

At GR 32694 97581, 637 m we went through a new paddock gate, which was unlocked. This was also pretty much the top of our climb today. On our left side, we now started to see distant views of the Bylong Labyrinth with the Cousins Creek valley in the foreground. A low ridge ahead of us, and running east showed the presence of large caves (to be explored at a later date).

At GR 32402 96259, the meadows stopped and we entered a forest dominated by the native cypress trees (*Callitris* sp.). We were glad about that as the trees provided some shelter from the icy cold wind. At this stage we tried to locate the path leading to the hermit's cave but were unable to do so. Rather than spending a lot of time looking for it, we decided to press on and to have another search effort on our way back, from the Redbank Creek side.

A sunny spot was found for lunch at GR 32226 95645, however the chill factor from the wind ensured the break was quite short (13:08-13:35).

After lunch, we were soon out of the forest and crossed a locked gate (GR 32186 94630) leading on to Bryan Kerney's property (the owner had been notified and given permission). In fact, it was Bryan Kerney who donated Gowrie Hut, and about one hectare of surrounding land to the Wollemi National Park in 1995.

We were soon greeted by a friendly black horse, which came close enough to be patted. Later investigation via Jayne revealed that it was left there due to old age. The horse seemed to be well fed, probably thanks to the abundant rainfall and grass on the property. I was a little bit sad however to see a horse which is a herd animal, on its own in this remote area.

The property has an old tool shed, a cattle yard, a what seems to have been a vegetable garden, and a number of old, fascinating pieces of machinery scattered around, including a 'Mobil' petrol bowser, a rain gauge, a grass roller (for a non-existent tennis court?). There is also a caravan which showed signs of more recent use. We spent some time there, wandering around and taking photos.

Soon, it was time to press on. After leaving the old farm, the road crosses a tributary of Cousins Creek, then crossed it several times and even went along its dry course for a while. After just over half a kilometre, at GR 33639 93715, we came to Cousins Creek itself. The creek had some pools and stretches of running water in it. The trail at this point entered a narrow valley flanked by 30-40 m cliffs with pagodas on both sides. Many interesting caves could be seen from the road. This last couple of



The old horse



The Widden Trail



The hut, restored by the NPWS



Sculptured stone in Lee Creek



kilometres before the hut were the most scenic part of today's journey.

We reached the Gowrie Hut, our destination for today and the base for the next two days at 14:50, GR 34130 93050, 624 m.

**T**he NP&WS signboard gives this description of the hut: "The hut was built sometime between 1900 and 1906 as a residence for a local settler Percy William Morrison and his family. It is constructed from hand sawn local stringybark and black pine using simple tools – axe, adze, wedges, threw and pitsaw, using the old fashioned 'vertical slab' technique." The building was restored by the NP&WS in 2001.

Although very rustic, the hut provided a very welcome shelter from the cold wind, and a roof over our heads. There was plenty of water in the tank. Inside, there were four rooms (three bedrooms), a huge fireplace, a chunky country style table, some benches and chairs, and even a timber food box, to keep the provisions away from the mice and other possible intruders, who judging by the evidence found, visit frequently.

By the time we settled in and collected firewood it was 15:30. Neil and I decided to go for a short walk to a lookout at GR 350 950. We had, however ended up climbing the ridge to the south of the intended one. The ridges in this area are generally very tricky, as there are lots of short ones that veer in different directions. I suppose they don't call it the Bylong Labyrinth for nothing. The short winter's day was fast drawing to a close, so after briefly consulting the map we decided to press ahead along the ridge we were on already. After about half an hour of steady climb we reached a point at GR 35216 93986, 724 m, from where we could see parts of Bylong River valley to the east and the cliffs nearby. The approaching dusk, the cold and the tree cover made the decision to turn around an easy one. We reached the hut in the fading light at 16:50.

The evening meal taken inside the hut around the fireplace was enjoyed by all, as was the conversation. Both were enhanced by a good quantity of red wine. Adrian and I decided to sleep in the hut. Neil stretched a fly on the edge of the timber verandah, whilst John and Roger preferred the comfort of their own tents. We were all in bed by 21:00.

**Wednesday, 8 June 2011**

Today's destination, the Lost Chord Crater and the areas sur-

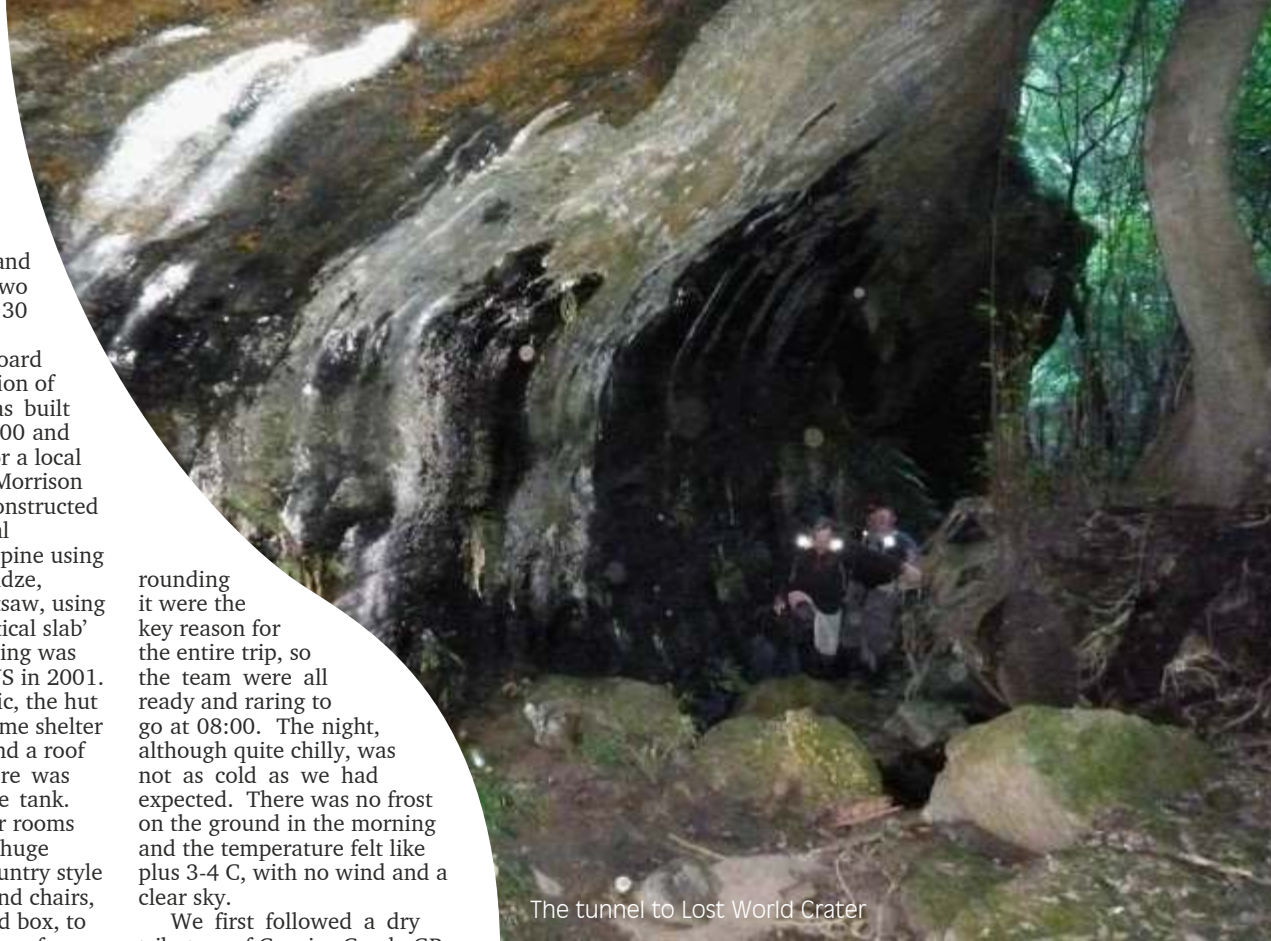
rounding it were the key reason for the entire trip, so the team were all ready and raring to go at 08:00. The night, although quite chilly, was not as cold as we had expected. There was no frost on the ground in the morning and the temperature felt like plus 3-4 C, with no wind and a clear sky.

We first followed a dry tributary of Cousins Creek, GR 340 929 in south-west direction. The open, flat, easy under foot grassland soon turned into thick and thorny bush. This forced us on to the ridge on the eastern side and steeply up the slope to reach a high point at GR 33559 92589, 729 m.

We continued south-south-west to what was noted on the map as a cliff line. To set the scene, we had spent all of yesterday and this morning walking through fairly open country, with only some minor rocks visible. Yesterday evening, helped by a few mugs of red wine, I was enthusiastically discussing a possibility of an alternative, "much easier" route to the Gowrie Hut from a road off Bylong Valley Way and through a pass up from Lee Creek. I was proclaiming that we "could cut the journey in half and make it in a fraction of the time we had spent walking the Widden Trail".

**R**ight now, we were approaching the point from where we needed to find and negotiate this innocent looking (on the map) pass in the opposite direction, down into Lee Creek.

I must say that coming up to the viewpoint at the cliff line, GR 33194 91947, 719 m, was a shock to my system. This is not because I am afraid of heights. It is just that I somehow expected the gently rolling country we spent the last 24 hours in, to continue to fall steadily and in a 'civilized' manner until it reached Lee



The tunnel to Lost World Crater

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Bracken in the crater

Creek. Instead, we stood on the edge of a 150 m abyss formed by a tributary immediately in front of us, with a further 150 m drop into Lee Creek within a short distance. The pagoda crowned cliffs all around us were awe inspiring.

From the previous research done by John Cooper, we knew that the pass down into the creek existed, as well as its approximate location. We traversed west along the cliff line to find a spot that looked like the top of the pass, GR 32687 92130, 718 m. It was 09:30.

It was time to regroup into an exploratory formation, with two scouts, Roger and Neil, in the front, looking for possible ways through the cliffs. At first we found ourselves on a rocky spur going west-south-west. It may have been leading us to another sheer drop. We could retrace our steps a hundred metres or so and cross towards the massive cliffs to the north of us where there seemed to be another gully with a possible descent route. This option was ruled out for now as we feared that the cliffs, half hidden in trees could contain some nasty surprises. A steep but negotiable ramp was soon found leading down and to the south side of the spur. We were soon able to look at the cliffs side-on rather than down from the top.

Several more steep ramps and rocky slots were found, at no time did we have to use the rope. As we continued in the south-westerly direction, the descent became easier and easier. We reached Lee Creek GR 32072 91521, 447 m, at 10:20 am.

Like several other creeks we previously visited in this area, Lee Creek had open, grassy terraces with plenty of very pretty places for a well deserved morning tea, 10:20-10:40.

Our route was now upstream for about two kilometres. The creek was a delight to walk in. It had intermittent pools of running water, often fringed by beautifully sculptured rocks, stretches of lusciously green grass, and now and then, big piles of smooth boulders that were fun and easy to hop around. What a contrast with the

austere cliffs and bottomless drops an hour ago!

In a little while, we came upon the first tributary gully to the east, GR 32741 90653. It may provide access to the cliffs above, but we had better plans and pressed on, remaining in the creek. The boulders were now getting bigger and bigger. At one point, we went up the slope a bit, to get around some house size rocks, then back into the creek again.

At 11:36, GR 32640 90261, we took the second gully to the east – the one that would hopefully take us to Lost Chord Crater. Our way forward was at first through wide, lightly timbered slopes, however huge sandstone cliffs on both sides of the gully ahead of us were closing in with every step, providing a taste of exciting things to come.

In a short while, the gully started to get tighter, more overgrown, darker and harder to negotiate by the minute. The vegetation was becoming thicker. A lot of weaving, bending, scrambling around rocks and under and over trees crawling followed.

We were soon in a very narrow gorge covered in rainforest jungle. At 12:17, GR 33152 89917, 547 m, the gorge formed two forks. We could see that the right branch would quickly lead us to the enormous sandstone cliffs basking in the sun a couple of hundred metres ahead where there would surely be some interesting slots and crevasses to investigate. The left branch looked very unfriendly and uninviting as it appeared to lead into a pitch-black tunnel. Over a quick drink, the map was consulted. We had to “take the road less travelled by” – the left fork.

A few minutes on, we entered a narrow and almost completely dark tunnel-like space formed by enormous wave shaped basalt boulders curved (or carved) by the water on one side, and high vertical cliffs on the other. It was just past midday and the sun must have been out in the sky, but none of its rays were able to penetrate down to the ground level. I am sure this area receives no daylight in winter, and probably only a very limited amount of it at other times of the year. The rounded walls we walked under, covered with huge phantasmagorical patterns left by the water and fungus, added to an eerie feeling of the place.

The tight tunnel section was only about 50 m long. Once through it, we continued climbing and were soon back in the rainforest filled gorge that now looked almost welcoming as it had a bit more light in it, compared with the ‘underworld’ we had just left behind.

Finally, at 12:45, GR 33700 90045, 641 m the gorge started to flatten, open up, and we found ourselves in Lost Chord Crater. The floor was covered with tall, luxuriant ferns, and we could at last see the blue sky above us, and high sandstone cliffs just below it. The cliffs were now some way out, so I didn’t get the feeling of being in an enclosed crater. It was a beautiful spot nevertheless. As we progressed towards the middle of the crater, the ferns and rainforest gave way to grassy timbered flats. It was a perfect spot for lunch, GR 34175 89996, 641 m, 13:00-13:25.

After lunch it was time to say goodbye to Lost Chord Crater, moving east for a few hundred metres to clear the tall cliffs that form the northern wall of the crater, then

steeply up through an opening in the cliffs, onto a ridge some 140 m above the crater floor, GR 34536 90318, 781 m, at 13:52.

From the enclosed, isolated world we had left half an hour earlier, we emerged into a vast open space with extensive views of the headwaters of Cousins Creek, Tal Tal Range to the left of it, the Bylong Labyrinth to the right, with both Crossword Peak and Puzzle Mountain visible in the distance (both were visited on two previous forays into this area earlier this year).

We were now walking north-north-west on a sandstone ridge that kept gradually climbing. Suddenly, at 14:14, GR 34393 90822, 834 m, the nature of the landscape changed without warning, in a space of 30-50 metres. The ridge became wider, flatter, and we had entered a park-like wonderland of native grasses and gentle trees fed by the rich nutrients from the basalt soil underneath. There were no weeds, just pure and pristine grasses, soft under foot, and the entire area looked like a beautiful native garden that had been carefully landscaped. I can only imagine what this would be like in spring, covered with wild flowers. In my opinion, this place alone would be worth the entire trip. Another highlight in a day that was full of them

About 25 minutes and less than a kilometre further, at GR 34061 91359, at 14:40, the magic had stopped as suddenly as it had begun. We were again on a sandstone ridge, devoid of grasses, with low thorny bush undergrowth. At 15:00, GR 33500 92152 we stumbled across what looked like an old road. By this time, we were on a ridge that would take us directly towards Gowrie Hut. Indeed, we soon descended the ridge and half an hour later (15:30) were back “home” at the hut, GR 34130 93050, 624 m.

This was a day of great adventure and incredible variety – we had dry open ridges, big pagodas, high awe-inspiring sandstone cliffs, a beautiful river, a pristine rainforest gorge, an isolated crater, a walk in the “underworld” in the tunnel, breathtaking views, high basalt meadows, and finally our historic hut – all within a space of eight short hours!

After a cup of tea, I went to do a bit of exploring in the area just above and west of the hut. I found lots of interesting and colourful cliffs and caves within fifteen minutes walk. The setting sun provided the perfect finale for a memorable day

**Thursday, 9 June 2011**

This night was colder than the previous one, and we woke to a bit of frost on the ground. The sky was cloudy, preventing the sun from warming up the atmosphere. We had breakfast, packed our bags, tidied the hut and were on our way by 08:15.

The plan of the morning was as follows: we would all (the four of us) walk together for the first couple of kilometres, until the start of the hill at the southern boundary of Bryan Kerney’s property. We would then split into two parties. Adrian and John would continue on the road, all the way back to the cars, whilst Roger and I would leave the road and return via Redbank Creek, whilst trying to locate the hermit’s cave at the same time. It was anticipated that the two groups would reach the cars within an hour or so of one another.

Accordingly, the party split in two at about 09:00. Roger and I followed the road up the hill until GR 32155 95694, 09:11,

from where we took a short eastern tributary of Redbank Creek. The creek was nice and open, however we had to stay above it, on its eastern bank if we wanted to find the hermit's cave.

At first, we followed a pleasant succession of sandstone and basalt slopes, with no cliffs or overhangs in sight. It was not too long however until the first cliff line appeared at about GR 321 962. As we were progressing down the creek, its level continued to drop, so the cliffs became bigger and bigger. We spent about an hour sidling the eastern slope, in the area indicated by Jayne, and within the parameters given to us by her – i.e. staying away from the creek as the cave is not visible from it. We also thought that the cave wouldn't be too far from the creek (for water supply), and is likely to be located near a spot where the creek forms natural pools. The cliffs were becoming higher and higher, so Roger and I soon had to split to be able to investigate the multiple, parallel cliff lines we were being presented with.

In the end, we didn't find the cave, the hermit Bill had eluded us for the time being. We had however found an extremely beautiful canyon-like gully at GR 31967 97213.

Next time, rather than following the Widden Trail all the way in from Hillview to Gowrie Hut, it may be worth it to take this gully, come down into Redbank Creek, then follow the creek up until the spot where Roger and I had left the road. From our first day, we know that we would then have

the most interesting part of the road left to travel towards the Hut.

**A**fter Roger and I had abandoned our search, we came down into Redbank Creek for morning tea and, ironically, found the biggest and the most interesting overhang of the morning, right at the creek bed, complete with its own roof support column – a big tree touching and embracing the rock. GR 31792 97356, 10:40-10:50.

After morning tea, the walk continued to be very pleasant and easy under foot, as the creek gradually kept dropping into the valley. There was a little bit of water in the creek bed. We had a few small scrambles, and towards the end, at only one spot where a waterfall forced us to climb up (both sides are fine, we climbed the western side). After the waterfall, we went back down into the creek, until it came out of the forested slopes, into the familiar open grass meadows.



The overhang in Redbank Ck

The walk down Redbank Creek was very enjoyable, plus due to its low saddle the entire ascent/descent is more gradual, compared to walking the road.

I think next time we should seriously consider the creek option for going up to Gowrie Hut. We were at the cars at 11:50, some 40 minutes after the first party. We popped into the Bylong store for a hot drink and to say thank you to Jayne. By this time she managed to find better coordinates for the cave, which I had noted.

There is more unfinished business in this area for the next trip! ♦

## The Demise of a Compass

### A Warning to All

Thaïs Turner

**P**roviding faithful direction and sometimes assisting with training & leadership duties for its owner, the Compass survived extremes of weather and terrain, extremes of physical movement, countless walks & outdoor activities (including more than 30 rogaines - from 3 hr to 30 hr events) & disputes about its accuracy by team members, during more than 15 years of companionship. Exemplary service most would say.

While it must be admitted that the faithful service was perhaps less than once

a month, rather than every day, the places in Australia (as well as the rest of the World) where the Compass had travelled were also extensive.

When not providing its owner with directions in life, it lived in a small calico pouch inside a pocket of a daypack and was taken everywhere the pack went, visiting local and foreign lands. This pocket was a comfortable base camp for the Compass.

Abandon nostalgia now and fast forward to the day at the end of June 2011, when the Compass was called into active service once more, while its owner participated on an inter-agency, remote area land search & rescue training weekend in the Megalong Valley, not so very far from its home grid reference in the lower Blue Mountains.

Not long into the practice bush search near Dunphy's camping area at Green Gully, and heeding another magnetic attraction greater than any known before, the Compass gave one final direction & bearing for its owner, then headed south and dipped towards the horizon in a final farewell, looking to explore greater gridlines and contours far away.

It was back at GR 4336 5805, some days after its demise, that its owner came to understand the reason for the sudden desire of the previously trusty

Compass to continually bear south and not want to level with her.

We all know from our high school geography lessons about the human desire to tame & convert the World into grids, bearings, angles, deflections, convergences, latitudes, longitudes, eastings, northings, and all things involved in navigation and map speak, to make sense of our locations. We also know from our high school science classes about magnetic fields and the ability of a compass to assist in our geographical endeavours when calibrated correctly.

**T**he Compass' owner suddenly remembered that she had been wearing a new shirt that day, with pocket flaps held together with small magnets (a recent fad by some outdoors clothing manufacturers). Having been located in that shirt pocket for some time in the previous few hours, the Compass had been unable to resist the magnetic attraction found therein, and so bid farewell to its owner to follow the stronger calling to head south and the distant horizon.

Its owner was sorry to see the Compass go in this direction, and fortunately has another to take the place of this favoured companion. She has also resolved to never again wear shirts or trousers with pocket flaps held together with magnets, as she doesn't want her new Compass to lose its sense of direction in life.

(Beware also the use of magnets for attachment of hydration pack drinking tubes, and take extreme care with credit cards that may get near any magnets used on clothing pockets). ♦







## A Ridge Nearly too far. . .

Hugh Speirs

A fine view of Mt Banks, and the intervening scrub

**F**or a long time I've wanted to explore a round walk along Carmarthen Ridge, down into and across King George's Brook, climbing to the southern extent of Mt Banks then returning over that substantial hill. Before this chosen day further study of the Mt Wilson map saw a revision: because of the daunting array of close-knit contours on the N side of the Brook and realising the strong possibility (almost a likelihood) that we might not find a crossing and have to retrace...

I decided that starting over Mt.Banks would be the better way in that a forced retracing would be more scenic and stimulating than hacking back up the thickly over-grown Carmarthen.

On the way up we stopped at the usual Grose Valley photo-stops, but today our interest also turned NE and the great twisting gorge of the Brook as we debated the various ridges we might try later in the day should we manage to cross it. Even near the source, shadowed cliffs were all too apparent. We climbed up 170 m - there's no point going up the further 22 m to the trig. As with the summit of Mt Hay you can't see past the trees - and the descent was uneventful.

Supporting sticks helped on some slippery bits. Em announcing he'd found a 'biggus stickus' which reminded me of

some film about Ancient Rome. Out onto Banks Ridge and morning tea at 10:20 looking towards the dissected sub-plateau above Explorers' Brook and Mt Hay to the east. Then off track to the N where the undergrowth has flourished since the fire of 5 years ago to the point of being 'a bit difficult'. In the planning stage other spurs further west seemed likely but the way chosen was to avoid that boring fire-trail around the base of Banks. Later, looking back down from our exit climb suggested that taking the spur from 564 807 to 569 8127 might be easier. Worth a look sometime.

Care was necessary not to become embroiled in stands of mallee-growth eucalypts. Then at last we could have a closer look at the main gully. On the map a nose at 572 8095 had attracted me. Some forward scout work from Em down into cliff-lined depths around 575 8085 was unproductive but did suggest a way across a tributary above a waterfall and a possible way to climb onto the nose. It had looked to Em that from the nose there was no way down to an adequate crossing - but we decided to check its W side. The unpleasant alternative would be to retrace our steps back to Mt Banks.

**A**fter a little crossing and scramble, lunch was really on the nose (of the spur!!). Visibility to the opposite mountain-side was better here and we could suss out the northern side and probable exit between two cliff lines (which we estimated at ca. 5725 813). Note - the southernmost outcrop on the map is at least four times longer than shown. Em, our indefatigable Forward Scout, took off again to find a way to a crossing and we zig-zagged our way cautiously down a steep descent of loose

rock and dry leaf build-up.

Em had found an easy crossing of the main brook (725 m alt) - just a shallow bit of water. From there our ascent was NW up a steep slope of wet rock covered



Working our way down

by sedge and razor-grass for support. At around 5725 812 we turned NE up and into the tree-line.

Uphill, hard going through thick scrub, but we eventually found the top of the Carmarthen Ridge. Caution was still needed. To my mind this is one of the most treacherous ridges to navigate. My GPS batteries, although fresh on the day, gave out. That didn't help! And Em's had given out earlier. Odometer read at 7.26 km near the 56 grid line so the walk measured about 8 km. It seemed twice that. We reached the Mt Banks road (915 m alt) about 1640. A series of knolls on the final ridge added 50 m altitude and the total for the day was ~420 m.

It proved to be the toughest walk I'd tried for some time. Bob kindly walked down to fetch the car, on the way meeting a NP ranger who expressed surprise at our taking it on and at the good time we'd made. But we were too late for coffee - a near-tragic note to end upon. A walk we won't forget - scenic, exciting, constantly challenging !! ♦



Crossing tributary to the nose

Photos: Hugh and Alice Speirs



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Wading Green Gully Creek, usually below waist deep.  
Photo: Dave Cauldwell

# Green Gully Track

Piers Thomas  
Ranger - Walcha Area,  
National Parks and Wildlife Service

**L**ooking for somewhere different for a four day walk? The National Parks and Wildlife Service has recently launched a new long distance walking track in Oxley Wild Rivers National Park, 90 km by road east of Walcha in Northern NSW. The track takes walkers deep into the recently added 'Green Gully' section of the park, and the Macleay Gorges Wilderness area.

Uniquely, there is no need to carry a tent, as restored mustering huts provide a basic but comfortable roof over your head each night. The Green Gully Track is also a loop track, meaning there is no need for a car drop off or pick up – you simply drive in, do your walk, then drive out again.

Covering 65 km over 4 days, including a 900 m descent on day two and a 600 m climb over 3 km on day four, the track is challenging. However, experienced walkers will have no problem covering the distance. The track can be undertaken as a four or five night walk. The start of the track is about two hours drive from Walcha, or two and a half hours from Port Macquarie. Five nights is recommended if you don't live within three hours drive of the start of the track.

The start of the Green Gully Track is at Cedar Creek Cottage, a 1970s era demountable house that has been fully refurbished to provide all the comforts of home, including bunk beds, slow combustion fire, hot shower, flushing toilet, gas barbecue, comfy lounges and a fully equipped kitchen. Cedar Creek Cottage also has a fully self contained

renewable power system generated through a mixture of solar and wind generators, powering a fridge and all internal lights. Your first and optional last nights are spent here, guaranteeing a comfortable bed and hot shower at the start and end of the track if you book for five nights.

Day one on the track takes walkers along Kunderang Trail, an old four wheel drive track that is still used by National Parks staff to manage this remote section of park. Walking from Cedar Creek Cottage to Birds Nest Hut on day one takes walkers along a ridge that separates the Kunderang Brook and Green Gully gorges, with lots of short, sharp climbs along the track, but no real hill climbs or drops. Birds Nest Hut is hidden away next to Brumby Creek, 17.5 km from Cedar Creek Cottage.

The start of day two brings walkers to their first 'off track' walking, a three kilometre gradual climb up a ridge to Birds Nest Trig. Navigation is easy – you just make sure you keep walking uphill! At 1200 m above sea level, this is the highest point on the track, and is a perfect spot for a quick cup of tea. Walking mostly down hill brings you to 'The Rocks Lookout' for lunch, with views over the bottom reaches of the Green Gully gorge towards the Apsley River. A fantastic ridge takes walkers the final 5 km down to a short stint of rock hopping over Brumby Creek before arriving at Green Gully Hut, where the luxury of a hot shower awaits!

The third day is all about water – there are over 20 creek crossings over Green Gully Creek, and in some places it is easier to walk in the creek than along the banks. Rock outcrops tumble into the creek, and endangered Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies bounce around on most of the rocks. The creek crossing at Green Gully canyon can be up to waist deep, so take care, but if it is warm enough the swimming holes will be worth the visit. Your third night is spent at Colwells Hut, the last mustering hut built in what is now Oxley Wild Rivers National Park.

Day four begins with a steep climb out of the gorge, ascending 600 m in less than 3 km, so it is best to start early to avoid



The Rocks Lookout.  
Photo: Shane Rummig, NPWS.

the heat of the day. The last 10 km is spent retracing your steps back to Cedar Creek Cottage, where a well earned hot shower and comfortable bed awaits those that have booked for five nights.

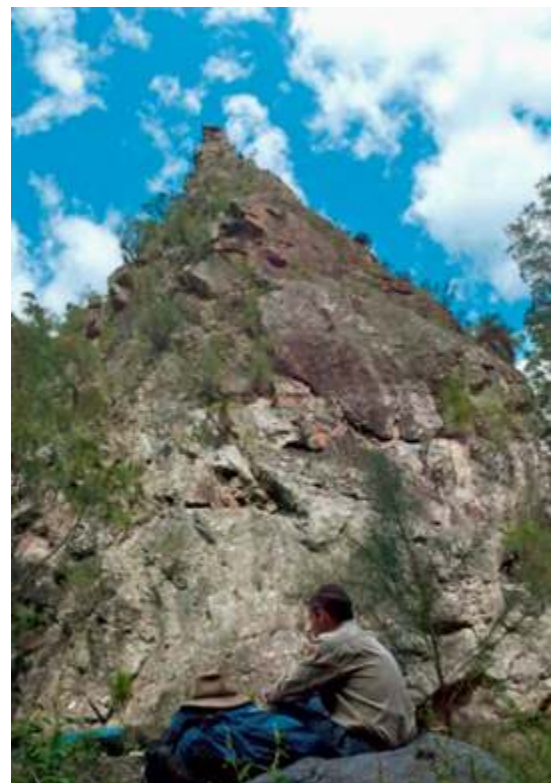
**T**he Green Gully Track requires basic navigation skills on days two and three, as there are areas where there is no track at all, and you have to be prepared to navigate up and down some simple ridges. Day three also involves many creek crossings that can be up to thigh deep, so it is a good idea to bring some old joggers for the creek crossings – Dunlop Volleys are highly recommended!

The ideal time to undertake the track is in spring and autumn, as summer can be oppressively hot in the bottom of the gorge, particularly when you are sleeping in a galvanised iron shed. The many creek crossings on day three can also be very chilly in winter, when frosts are common.



Birds Nest Hut on Brumby Creek.  
Photo: Roger Mills, NPWS.

Cliffs above the Green Gully Gorge, where the creek cuts through a major dyke. Photo: NPWS.







The tall gums are majestic and beautiful.  
Photo Dave Cauldwell.

More information on the track can be found at:

[www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/greengully](http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/greengully) (scroll down to find the Green Gully Track entry).

Or you can contact National Parks in Walcha on (02) 6777 4700, or:

[walcha.area@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:walcha.area@environment.nsw.gov.au)

## Editorial comment

**E**xperienced walkers and conservationists may be slightly boggled by the implications of this article. The NPWS is actually running 'pseudo-commercial' huts in a National Park? So I had a long chat with Piers Thomas, the Ranger in charge of the Walcha area and one of the driving forces behind the idea. He made the following interesting points.

The area had been grazed for 150 years before it became a Park. It is hardly a 'pristine wilderness' in the sense of portions of Wollemi NP, or places like Alaska. Nonetheless, the gorge country is still pretty wild, as you can see from the photos.

The 4WD tracks and the huts were already there from the grazing era, and both were already being maintained by the NPWS anyhow. Nothing new has been built or added - except for the paved area outside the huts, a reconstruction of an old shelter and sealed pit toilets to manage human waste. All the huts are next to creeks, so managing human waste in these locations is critical. That is similar to what has been put in place at, say, the Dunphy Camping Area in the Wild Dogs.

To the above I would add that all the National Parks in the UK and many of the National Parks in Europe are on private property. Those countries do manage to make farming and conservation co-exist. Australia is actually quite rare, in that so

much of our National Park estate is still Crown Land.

The fee mentioned is largely to help cover the costs of maintaining the huts, especially the Cedar Creek Cottage at the start. The NPWS is not making a profit out of this (at least, not yet). Maintenance costs, like mowing around every hut once a month for fire safety, are not low.

There has been and will be no change in the policy of not permitting developers into National Parks to erect private structures. All the NPWS is doing here is to make use of existing infrastructure, to help people see the contents of a National Park.

The limit of 6 people at any hut is being strictly enforced. That means the maximum party size is six: you can't have six sleeping inside the hut and six sleeping in tents outside. What clubs have done already is to run several parties, one day apart. Note however that staying at the Cedar Creek Cottage at both start and end of the walk can make this complicated, as there is a limit there as well. Discuss with the Ranger.

There is a camping ground at Werrikimbie NP about 15 minutes away by car. This can be used as an overflow. The nearest motel accommodation is 1.5 hr away.

*Roger Caffin*

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The rugged valleys of the Cirque de Mafate are criss-crossed by walking trails.

# A Walkers Paradise

Janet Morris, The Bush Club

**W**hat an amazing view! Soaring cliffs and peaks, spikes and spires of hills, canyons and chasms. This is the Cirque de Mafate (above) on Reunion Island in the Indian ocean. And there are two other cirques!

To complete the picture, the crater of an active volcano is also accessible. Not to mention the rainforests and waterfalls?

Walking tracks traverse these scenic wonderlands. In an island 50 km by 70 km the central peak is over 3000 m high and most walks are over 1000 m, so even

from Sydney now stop at Reunion on their way to France. The opportunity is there to take a break on your way to Europe, a more enticing prospect for the walker than Abu Dhabi or Singapore. We took this option on a recent trip to France and stayed there for a week.

An Overseas Department of France, the culture is a mix of French tradition and Creole heritage within the euro zone. If you are comfortable walking in France and have some knowledge of the language, you would find no problems on the well marked and mapped Grande Randonees and other tracks on the island.

For overnight walks, walker's gites, with dinner, bed and breakfast, can be booked from Australia. The Cirque de Mafate has no vehicular traffic and is an area of choice for multiday walks. A visit to the highest point, the Piton des Neiges, would be a highlight.

As we only had one week, we hired a small car and set off up the hairpin bends to the heights to do a series of day walks on a circuit of the island. Views and waterfalls (up to six in view at once), rainforest, the delightful, open tamarin forest, amazing expanses of vegetation- free lava fields – we enjoyed them all.

Extremely comfortable and hospitable

B&B accommodation around the island is half the price it would be in Australia. These establishments usually offer a French/Creole three course dinner which is always preceded by a fruit flavoured rum aperitif. A warning: the signature food of the island, with a thousand recipes, is the chouchou or choko.

In contrast to many islands the focus of both locals and visitors is on the interior rather than the sea. Picnic places abound and the locals take full advantage of them on the weekends. On the local TV



Walkers climb a volcanic hill on the lava fields surrounding the Piton de la Fournaise volcano. The active crater is accessible as a day walk.

channel, after the children's cartoons in the morning, appeared what was obviously - "The Bushwalk of the Day". Four walkers were shown preparing their packs, setting off on the track following the signposts. Also shown were the interesting features on the walk and the state of the track. Truly a bushwalkers' country – when will we see a program like that on TV in Australia! ♦



National Park rangers at a lookout had maps, information and telescopes available for holiday period walkers

though the island is in the tropics, certainly in the winter the walking temperature is comfortable.

Popular with European walkers, Reunion Island is little known in Australia

There are at least five waterfalls to be seen at this viewing point near the Cirque de Salazie

This is a view of the Cirque de Salazie from the forest walk. Yes, there is a track to the top of the hill in the picture.



Photos: Barry Hanlon





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Mt Barney East  
from the bottom



## Mount Barney, the easy way

Michael Smith,  
Nimbin Bushwalkers

**M**ount Barney is said to have the aboriginal name 'Boogah Boogah', meaning 'go away, get further away'. There is a dream-time legend about a murder having been committed there, resulting in a curse being put on the mountain. Thus the local

However, from the summit he could see the real Mount Warning peeping over the Border Ranges, much further east. He named the peak Mount Hooker, but his map was lost and it was later renamed Mount Barney after Lieutenant Colonel Barney, Private Secretary to Sir George Gipps. Within two years Logan was murdered, aged just 29. From the records it would seem that people were queuing up to finish him off. To understand why, read the words of the song that commemorates him, 'Moreton Bay'. Such were the hard and dangerous times of colonial Australia that both his walking companions also died not long after, aged 43 and 47.

In mid winter of 2011 myself and Michael Dillon departed the Yellow Pinch car park, in 4 C temperature, to hopefully summit via the south ridge. There are a dozen ways up the mountain and people who think highly of themselves have named this, the easiest route, 'Peasants Ridge'. Apparently it is unworthy of any respectable bushwalker to go this easy way. In his 64 years Michael has climbed four of the 'seven summits'. I claimed one of them myself when I rode my motorbike to the top of Mount Kosciuszko in the 1960's, when such was allowed. The South Ridge would do us fine in our dotage.

In the three hours it took to get to the saddle, we encountered a few challenges worthy of mention. The most dangerous section of the whole trip was the slab. Imagine a 20 metre section of rock slab sloping down about 40 degrees. Within is a crack 100 mm wide and 50 mm deep angling diagonally across it. By keeping your feet in the crack you can make it across. There is no way of protecting yourself with a rope, and the drop

below would be fatal. We found coming down this to be easier, by sitting on the slab above, feet in the crack and using hands, bum and feet to edge down. The timid could probably go up this way. The chimney, 20 x 1 x 1 metres was a nice test of flexibility. It had enough ladder-like natural steps to make it less than a rock climb.

There were 2 flat areas on the way up where one could spend the night, but the two approved campsites were higher up. It is necessary to book a campsite, on line, and hand over the king's shilling. We passed through Rum Jungle campsite and put our tents up at the Old Hut Site. Here, The Department of Environment and Resource Management allow just 2 tents and up to 6 people. Between us we had it fully booked.

I like to go lightweight, but this time my pack weighed 13 kg, including 5 kg of water. I need not have bothered as there was plenty of good, clean, gurgling water in the creek next to the campsite. There is much talk of getting lost between here and the top of East Peak. I took a GPS fix on the campsite, to leave an electronic trail of crumbs, and plotted a compass bearing. However, from here on there are few trees, the bush is low, and at all times we could see both the top of the mountain and the campsite.

The views were becoming breathtaking as we walked the last of the 1100 metre climb. Here at 1351 metres we could look over the top of the outrageously difficult Mount Lindesay, part of the NSW-Qld border. The world was spread below. To the north a bush fire burned in The Portals. To ensure that we might be toasted both sides, a vigorous fire burned on the slopes of



Morning mist from West Peak

tribes are forbidden to climb it. The current topographic map shows alternative names of Dooayrdu and Yahndaddan, for Barney has two peaks.

The first European to climb the mountain, 183 years ago, was Captain Patrick Logan, the infamous commandant of the Moreton Bay Penal Colony. He was accompanied by a couple of plant-fanciers Charles Frazer and Alan Cunningham, who found the going too tough and gave up before reaching the summit. Logan at the time thought he was climbing Mount Warning which Cook had named, without visiting it, from his ship Endeavour.

Just below East Peak, looking north







The Old Hut campsite

next 13 hours of darkness in our sleeping bags.

I had nearly warmed mine up when Michael started snoring with such practiced regularity and commitment that I knew I could never

sleep here tonight. I did the only thing possible, rolled up my tent, airbed and sleeping bag in one untidy bundle and decamped to Rum Jungle 150 metres away. The campsite was deserted, in fact we saw nobody else the whole trip. It did have a resident possum who let out a screeching laugh as I settled down. The much-too-educated Brushtail visited my tent door many times before I drifted off. Would he mug me for my breakfast? Would the Camping Police visit me in the dead of night and fine me 50 penalty units? Next morning I wandered back to the Old Hut Site, which was much colder, and concocted a moderately believable story of alien abduction, probes and all.

It was time to climb the West Peak.

Considered harder than the East Peak, it took just an hour to crest. We avoided the large areas of steep, bare slabs and walked up the narrow scrubby gullies. Here ferns and bushes grew thickly, providing valuable hand holds. Beyond the first 50 metres there was no track. All around was evidence of the first flush of spring. Several kinds of Epacris perfumed the air. Blooming Banksias tempted honeyeaters. We stirred up clouds of pollen brushing through the She Oaks. Below was a magic world of pointy peaks showing through a downy fog. A plucky fire persisted in the gorge, leaving artistic trails of smoke. Here, on the fourth highest mountain in Queensland, we had before us one of the great sights of Australia.

There are plenty of walk reports on the net if you would like to know what to expect of this walk. Freezing nights spent on Barney, rescues, deaths, and Bear Grills fantasy survival stories. Taken over two days as we did, I would rate it dramatic, surprising, beautiful and not particularly difficult. It may even be one of the best walks in Australia. ♦

Photos: Campsite: Michael Smith,  
rest: Michael Dillon

Mount Lindesay. East Peak (yet another name for Boogah Boogah-Dooayrdn-Hooker-Barney), took an hour each way.

Back on our snug rock shelf it was time for food, hot drinks, rest and conversation. One of the pleasures of a night in the bush is a camp fire. Alas, fires are not permitted, with the maximum penalty being '165 penalty units' and an on-the-spot fine. The temperature fell with the light, and before dark I was wearing everything I had, including wet weather gear, to keep out the cold. For a campfire I had brought a wax-filled, small tobacco tin, sporting 2 wide wicks. It gave out a flickering light, nearly as cheery as a real campfire, but as our fingers numbed with the cold we resigned to spending the

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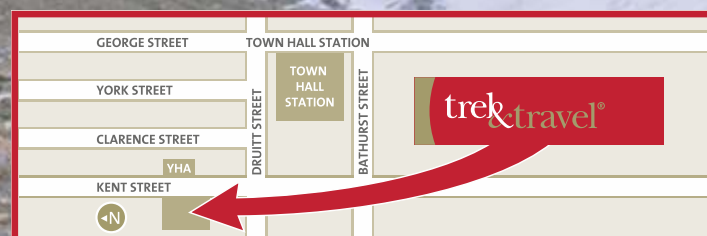
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